DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 480 IR 050 705

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TITLE A Bird's-Eye View of the Present Role of Libraries and University Presses in the Dissemination of Modern Language Studies.
PUB DATE 29 Dec 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Centennial Meeting of the Modern Languages Association (New York, NY, December 29, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Information Dissemination; Information Science; Information Storage; Library Role; *Library Services; Online Systems; *Publishing Industry; *Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS *University Presses

ABSTRACT

This overview presents a list of topics and questions concerned with the utilization of new methods of information storage and dissemination by libraries and university presses, a list of considerations related to the functions and goals of these institutions, and technological considerations for publishers in the areas of electronic publishing and microform and videotext publishing formats. Library concerns related to online storage and retrieval of machine readable information are discussed, including the growth of textual and bibliographic databases and the use of computer conferencing and teleconferencing. It is noted that scholars in the fields of modern languages and literatures need to be educated in the use of new information technology. Questions related to the editorial/publishing policies and budgeting practices of university presses are outlined, as are topics related to library acquisition, collection development, and such library services as shared cataloging, communication via electronic messages, interlibrary lending, online searching, and bibliographic instruction. A 29-item bibliography is provided. (ESR)

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A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PRESENT ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND UNIVERSITY PRESSES IN THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERN LANGUAGE STUDIES.

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Paper presented at the 1983 (Centennial) Meeting of the MLA (Dec. 29, 1983)

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605. Today's Academic Libraries and University Presses: Their Role in Modern Language Studies

9:00–10:15 p.m., Morgan, Hilton

A Special Session; Session Leader: Danielle Mihram, New York Univ.

1. "A Bird's-Eye View of the Present Role of Libraries and University Presses in the Dissemination of Modern Language Research," Danielle Mihram
2. "Reviewing Scholarly Books: Facts, Problems, Approaches," Paul J. Korshin, Univ. of Pennsylvania

Respondents: Abbot M. Friedland, Princeton Univ. Press; Richard Koffler, Association of American University Presses; William P. Germano, Columbia Univ. Press

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In the last twenty-five years technological developments have led to an explosion of information and this, in turn, has created the need to examine and evaluate the means by which this information is communicated, disseminated, and stored. The implications of this current state of affairs are of paramount importance to scholars in the Humanities and, more particularly, to those who teach, work, and publish in the more specific fields of modern languages and literatures.

In a relatively recent study H.S. Bailey, Jr. (1) reported that budgetary constraints have forced some university presses to reduce, or steer away from, publications in specialized scholarly fields such as literary studies (in particular: studies of a single work, studies of foreign language literatures, and highly technical studies in linguistics and philology) but he notes "perhaps it is misleading to specify these kinds of books as being difficult to publish. Much more depends on how the book is written" (p. 226).

Indeed, on the other side of the coin, we find that scholars are becoming "addicted" to their own word processors. The possibility of producing a camera-ready copy of a work, with one's own word processor, will become increasingly feasible as a result of an ongoing project, the development of a generic code for electronic typesetting, approved by the American Association of Printers, which will allow the scholar and copy editor to input on their own floppy disk (containing the "typescript") all the necessary copy-editing instructions before the work's final trip to the printer. Questions such as "information explosion" and editorial guidelines and standards immediately come to mind here.

Since university presses are recognized as being the chief publishers of humanists' scholarly works and, as a corollary, since

academic and research libraries have been typically the chief purchasers and depositories of books published by university presses, it behooves us to identify and examine the needs of scholars who are working and publishing in the field of modern languages and literatures. Furthermore, in view of the potential "information explosion" which technological advances can continue to create it becomes clear that librarians, publishers, and scholars must work more closely together so as to better understand each other's roles and contributions in our age of tele-communications (See Cole (5), Corson (6), De Gennaro (7), and Featheringham (10)).

It would be unrealistic to embark (in the time available in this session) on a detailed discussion of all the salient points pertinent to our titular subject. However, it is possible to provide, for the ensuing panel discussion, a set of topics and questions which we could roughly organize under the headings listed below. Each discussant has been given a copy of the listing and our aim is to underscore and bring to light the various concerns and goals which characterize libraries and university presses. Furthermore I would hope that we shall all conclude, at the end of this session, that university presses and libraries have become intrinsic elements of the educational process in academia, and so, for that very reason, that we should be thinking about new ways in which modern language studies can best exploit the many resources now available to the academic community.

I. WHAT TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS CAN WE EXPLOIT?

A. Publishers

1. Electronic Publishing (e.g. journals, newsletters, proceedings): electronic redaction and typesetting (authors could submit diskettes produced at their personal word processor). This aspect of publishing leads, in turn, to a consideration of questions such as:
   - the need for standards for computer software;
   - which software packages are better suited to research in Modern Language Studies?
   - editorial guidelines specifically designed for electronic usage not only on the national level but, rather, internationally, anticipating international requirements, in our world of satellite communications;
   - privacy of authorship; and,
   - copyright of material.

   (See also Singleton (24) and Strawhorn (25)).

2. Publishing Formats. Books are still standard format for publishing in Modern Language research and, in some rare cases, microfilms have been used. However, are not microtexts, microprints, microfiches, and videotexts just as useful for teaching purposes? The potential of videotexts published on optical videodisks is enormous, and they constitute an untapped format for teaching at the undergraduate level.

B. Libraries

1. Online storage and retrieval of machine-readable information:

(a) texts (online dictionaries, machine-readable texts). Many machine-readable texts have been compiled by scholars for their individual research, and could (theoretically) be purchased by libraries and placed in "machine-readable text collections." There is currently a newly created service, the ARTFL textual database (American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language) which consists of a large number of machine-readable texts in French literature and which is available through institutional academic libraries from the University of Chicago (Divisions of the Humanities and Social Sciences) the co-owner of a French project which was begun at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris). We can anticipate a growth of such textual databases.

(b) bibliographic databases. The existing number of databases for modern languages is increasing. In addition to the sources available in the U.S. such as Dialog and BRS (through which one can search the MLA Bibliography, Dissertation Abstracts, and ERIC, to name just a few) it is now possible to access international networks such as, for example, Questel, a French service (with an American representative in Washington, DC) which supplements the American online bibliographic information and is accessible directly from the librarian's terminal via satellite communication. Similar service, throughout Europe, could broaden immensely the scope of research in modern languages.

(c) Computer conferencing (online messages); tele-conferencing (see Cherry (4)). Two communicative services which can be organized through institutional libraries.

C. Scholars/Writers

The greatest perceived need here is the education of scholars: how extensive is the scholar/writer's awareness of (and competency/expertise with) the "new technology"? (See Katzen (16); Kerr (17)).

II. WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS AND GOALS OF UNIVERSITY PRESSES AND LIBRARIES?

A. University Presses

(See "What is a University Press," by Meyer and Phillabaum (21)). Because university presses are, to a large extent, dependent on subsidies from their host university, budgeting and production costs are of prime importance. This, in turn, affects:

1. Their editorial/publishing policies. (Denniston (8); Fruge (11); Higham (15)). As interest in the production of highly specialized publications in modern languages and literatures has diminished, and as there has occurred a proliferation of journals, the questions which authors and editors must face are:

(a) what fraction of the books published by university presses are reviewed? (more to the point: where do most of the reviews appear? learned journals? book review digests? newspapers? (e.g., Times Literary Supplement, New York Review of Books). Furthermore how competent are the reviewers?

(b) who reads those books, and, quite importantly, who buys them (aside from libraries (Bailey (1); Mycue (22)).

(c) how familiar is the author/scholar with the policies and goals of university presses? (Langford (18)).

(d) what are the goals and standards of university presses, and how are these determined? (Olson (23); Weber (26); Wilson (28)).

(e) how receptive are editors to manuscripts originating from authors not affiliated with the host university? Furthermore, how publicized are arrangements and support funds between universities with presses and those without? (Ervin (9)).

2. Their Budgeting

(a) Since the presses' survival depends on planning and innovation, what innovations in modern languages studies would ensure "profitable" publications, without compromising on the standards of excellence in scholarship? (Becker (2); Bhagat (3); Goellner (12); Harvey (14); Langley (19)).

(b) what are the elements which affect the cost of a book's production in the field of language studies (paper? editing? special typesetting for foreign languages?) (See Bailey (1); Levant (20)).

B. Libraries

1. Acquisitions, Collection Development

Budgetary constraints have also led to a revolution in the world of librarianship. Today more so than ever before, the myth of the self-sufficient, all encompassing library, becomes quite evident. New approaches in collection development and management have led to more realistic

acquisition policies leading to resource sharing with other libraries, and book selection profiles which are tailored to the needs of the specific university being served. Scholars are still quite unaware of the many interlibrary loan services which are now possible and which could bring a wealth of information to their home campus within a relatively short period of time.

Book preservation concerns have also led librarians to examine the physical qualities of book production (paperbacks vs. hard-bound copies; microfilm vs. paper copy; acid-free paper for reference books). Such consideration should be part of an author's decision when choosing a university press.

2. Services Offered

(a) Shared cataloguing via online services such as OCLC and RLIN. Since these databases can be searched for location of material (for interlibrary loan purposes) or by subject (for browsing purposes) they constitute a valuable service provided by the library;

(b) Electronic messages. Librarians can communicate online from one part of the country to the other, thereby reducing significantly time lags in communication;

(c) Interlibrary loans. As noted above requests for interlibrary loans have been facilitated thanks to online services. Of great interest to scholars is the developing acceptance of international interlibrary loans: the British Library is now offering an international lending and copying service for libraries.

(d) Online searching. Customized bibliographic lists of specific subjects of research can be obtained via online searching by librarians of databases provided by services such as Dialog, BRS, and Questel. The potential for extremely broad (or, conversely, extremely specific) perimeters of research is enormous.

(e) Bibliographic instruction. More and more frequently librarians are now subject specialists in specific fields of knowledge, possessing doctoral (or advanced) degrees in those disciplines in addition to degrees in library science. They are thus able to provide orientation seminars on bibliographic sources in subjects offered in the academic curriculum. They are also providing customized research bibliographies in their field of expertise which can be used by both beginners and advanced-level students as well as faculty and researchers. Research methods seminars are also offered on some campuses by librarians. Finally, some subject specialists participate in departmental curriculum decisions and such decisions may affect, in turn, the decisions relating to collection development and management.

The discussion of the points delineated above will show (it is hoped) that university presses and libraries are not marginal components of the academic world. As publishers and depositories of scholarly research, they contribute to, and help shape, the course of a university's long range educational plans. As intrinsic elements of the educational

process they have proved to be at the very center of intellectual ferment. In the field of modern language research there are many resources which will need to be explored and tapped: our colleagues in the sciences have led the way in this: it is high time for us to compete now, actively, in the race for knowledge dissemination.

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